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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0968  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 3241  
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU PRIORITY 0379  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY 0998  
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI PRIORITY 2689  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG PRIORITY 7184  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000038

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION SWEEPS LEGISLATIVE BY-ELECTIONS

REF: TAIPEI 0031

Classified By: Political Section Chief Dave H. Rank for Reasons 1.4(B/D).

1. (SBU) Summary: Surprising most observers, including many within the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) itself, the DPP swept Taiwan's January 9 legislative by-elections, winning three seats in the KMT strongholds. Although the DPP still controls only a small minority of the seats in the Legislative Yuan (LY), the vote is another political blow to the Ma Ying-jeou administration. Shaken, the KMT has an opportunity to regroup in February, when its candidates are better positioned to win in another set of legislative by-elections. End Summary.

DPP Scores an Unlikely Trifecta

2. (SBU) Candidates from Taiwan's opposition DPP party scored a trifecta, winning January 9 parliamentary by-election races in Taichung, Taitung, and Taoyuan counties, three traditional KMT strongholds. Observers noted that the KMT faced challenges in all three races. Two of the seats were vacated when the KMT legislators originally elected were convicted of vote-buying and the KMT candidate for the third seat had been dogged by scandal. Nevertheless, the results were yet another setback for the Ma administration. KMT Secretary General King Pu-tung, who worked on Ma's presidential campaign and was only recently called into service following KMT setbacks in the December elections, told local media that he, Ma, and the party would face the results of the election squarely, learn from the loss, and continue reform efforts. KMT legislators were scheduled to meet with Ma January 10 for a post-election strategy session, and a number have already publicly urged Ma, who is also KMT Chairman, to accelerate party reforms, weed out the vote-buying practice prevalent in local politics, and strengthen communication with the legislature and the public.

3. (SBU) The vote gives the DPP 30 seats in the LY, just over one-quarter of the total. More importantly, the DPP now has the votes to file motions to recall the President or amend the constitution. More practically, the DPP now can introduce legislation, request the President to appear before the legislature, and block KMT-proposed constitutional amendments. Speaking to the media, DPP Chair Tsai Ing-wen confirmed that her party had no plans to push for Ma's recall, but said the party would use its new leverage to check the power of the KMT.

DPP Lineup for 2012?

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¶4. (SBU) In one indication of the DPP's renewed energy, Taiwan's media were rife with speculation about the future of the party. Former President Lee Teng-hui suggested former DPP Chair Lin Yi-hsiung and current chair Tsai Ing-wen run as the DPP's candidates for president and vice president in ¶2012. Lin, whose mother and twin daughters were murdered while he was serving a prison term for his role in the 1979 Kaohsiung Incident, remains popular today, and, with the DPP's recent electoral successes, Tsai has consolidated her position and influence with DPP supporters. When asked by the press, Lin did not rule out a presidential run in 2012 while Tsai responded that the party's nomination policy would be decided by its members at the DPP national congress January 24.

Comment

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¶5. (C) Both parties, surprised by the outcome of the most recent by-election, are buckling down for the next legislative by-elections and, more importantly, the crucial year-end elections in the five special municipalities - Taipei City, New Taipei City (Taipei County), Taichung, Kaohsiung, and Tainan. The KMT should fare better in next month's legislative by-elections, since the KMT officials who vacated those seats left because they won in last December's county magistrate races, rather than in the wake of

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corruption prosecutions.  
STANTON